ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
and
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

for the

SECTION 593 WATER RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT ACT

CONSTRUCTION OF THE

SOUTH VALLEY WATER SYSTEM EXPANSION PROJECT

BERNALILLO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

US Army Corps of Engineers®
Albuquerque District

4101 Jefferson Plaza NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87109

September 2008

Finding of No Significant Impact
Construction of the South Valley Water System Expansion Project,
Bernalillo County, New Mexico

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps), Albuquerque District, in cooperation with, and at the request of the Bernalillo County (County), New Mexico, is proposing the continued expansion of water service to the South Valley. The construction work would be conducted under the authority of Section 593 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1999 (Public Law 106-53; 33 U.S.C. 2201 *et seq.*), as amended. The Act authorizes the Corps to provide assistance for design and construction for water-related environmental infrastructure and resource protection and development projects in central New Mexico. Bernalillo County is the local sponsor. The duration of the proposed construction would be two years, and is expected to start in the fall of 2008.

The Corps proposes to adopt the 2004 Environmental Assessment (EA) titled "Construction of Water System Expansion Project for the South Valley Located in Bernalillo County, New Mexico, Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Project Number: XP-986550-1" (FONSI signed August 16, 2004 by EPA) for the proposed action. Under this EA, the water transmission lines from Broadway Blvd under the Rio Grande to Coors Road were constructed by Bernalillo County with EPA funding from 2004 through 2007.

The Corps would construct the water transmission line along Parito Road and a steel reservoir as part of the larger South Valley Drinking Water Project to provide potable drinking water and fire protection to residents of the area. The proposed project would include construction of 9000 lineal feet of 36" transmission water line and a three million gallon above ground steel reservoir tank. The transmission water line will start at Coors Boulevard and proceed west along Pajarito Road to the reservoir site which is located west of Douglas Road and south of Pajarito Road (see Figure 3). The design for the water transmission line and reservoir has been completed by Bernalillo County. All lands and easements to construct the project have been purchased by the County. The estimated total Corps project cost is $3.75 million. This cost will include all construction, administration and contingency fees to complete the transmission water line to the new reservoir site.

Under the No-Action alternative, there would not be any improvements made to the water delivery infrastructure. The South Valley residents would continue to rely on ground water wells and septic systems. The No-Action alternative should be perceived as an environmentally unsound course of action with continued groundwater depletions and septic system discharge.

A Notice of Availability (see Appendix D) of the FONSI and Adopted EPA's Environmental Assessment dated August 16, 2004 which described the Corps proposed construction project was published in the Albuquerque Journal. The public comment was held July 28 through August 27, 2008. No comments were submitted to the Corps.

The proposed work would not affect waters of the United States regulated by Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA; 33 U.S.C. 1251 et seq.); therefore a Section 404(b)(1) analysis would not be needed for the project.

The local Floodplain Administrators (FA) has stated that construction of the proposed project should not adversely impact the existing floodplains within the city or county. Therefore, the planned action is consistent with Executive Order 11988 (Floodplain Management). The proposed work complies with Executive Order 11990 (Protection of Wetlands) as no wetlands are within the Project area.

One newly recorded archaeological site, six isolated occurrences, 22 historic buildings, portions of 16 historic irrigation ditches, a segment of the BNSF Railway track, and one bridge were documented during a cultural resources survey of the project area. This project will not have an adverse effect on any of these resources, and there are no known tribal concerns associated with the proposed work. The State Historic Preservation Office concurred with the Corps' "no adverse effect" determination for this project on April 22, 2008.

Best Management Practices (BMPs) that would be employed during construction include the use of silt fences as part of the Fugitive Dust Control Permit, and the use of existing paved or graveled roads for access to the work area. The trenches would be examined daily, prior to starting work, for small mammals and reptiles to be removed prior to initiating work. A Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan would be prepared by the contractor and implemented during construction. Disturbance to vegetation during construction would be mitigated by re-seeding and revegetation with plant species native to New Mexico. All equipment would be cleaned when moving between areas to prevent transfer of noxious weeds.

Only short-term, minor adverse impacts to land use, water resources, aesthetics, soils, air, noise, vegetation, and wildlife, would occur during construction. No long-term impacts would occur to land use, water resources, climate, soils, air, wetlands or other waters of the U.S., special status species, floodplains, socioeconomics, environmental justice or cultural resources. Minor beneficial impacts would occur for human health and safety. The proposed project would not result in any moderate or significant, short-term, long-term, or cumulative adverse effects.

The planned action has been fully coordinated with federal, state, tribal, and local agencies with jurisdiction over the ecological, cultural, and hydrological resources of the Project area. Based upon these factors and others discussed in the Environmental Assessment, the planned action would not have a significant effect on the human environment. Therefore, an Environment Impact Statement will not be prepared for the proposed improvement of water and sewer lines.

17 Sept 2008
Date

Kimberly M. Colloton
Lieutenant Colonel, U.S. Army
District Commander

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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

CONSTRUCTION of WATER SYSTEM EXPANSION PROJECT
for the
SOUTH VALLEY
located in
BERNALILLO COUNTY, NEW MEXICO

EPA Project Number: XP-986550-1

BACKGROUND

The proposed project is located in Bernalillo County (County), New Mexico, adjacent to the City of Albuquerque (City) and is shown on the maps enclosed as Figures 1 and 2. The County initiated the planning phase of the proposed South Valley Water System Expansion Project (Project) in August 2002. The proposed project consists of extending the existing City metropolitan area water utility system to provide municipal water service to the far South Valley. The South Valley is located in the unincorporated area of the County adjacent to and southwest of the City. The project area is characterized as semi-rural with pockets of dense development, The primary water supply source for the area is individual on-site shallow ground water wells. Domestic wastewater management for the area predominantly consists of on-site septic systems with subsurface wastewater disposal. The combination of a shallow ground water supply source and local wastewater disposal practices poses a continued threat to ground water quality in the area. The goal of the project is to protect public health and safety by providing safe drinking water and adequate fire protection in accordance with Federal, state, and local environmental protection standards.

The proposed project is a component of the Valley Utilities Project (VUP) which was developed to protect ground water supplies in the area, and to continue the efforts initiated by the Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Ground Water Protection and Policy Plan of 1994. The VUP was initiated in 2001 by a Memorandum of Understanding between the County, the City, and the Village of Los Ranchos. The project consists of providing municipal water and sanitary sewer service to the developed, but not yet served, areas of both the North and South Valleys within the County. The proposed water system will be owned and operated by the recently formed joint Albuquerque/Bernalillo County Water Utility Authority (ABWUA).

The proposed conceptual water system is primarily based on 1982 City water utility master planning documents which originally identified a water system to serve the far South Valley, and was designated as the Pajarito Trunk System. The project would implement part of this trunk system with modifications based on updated population data, water usage data, and land use/development information. A primary difference from the original master plan is that no new wells are anticipated for this proposed project because water will be supplied by existing

storage reservoirs located outside of the project area. The major components anticipated for the proposed water system include a water storage reservoir(s), booster pumping station(s), transmission and distribution piping, and associated appurtenances. The proposed system will provide a reliable water system to the residents and the businesses in the South Valley at a scale and level of service (LOS) that is consistent with land use designations and densities from the Southwest Area Plan which was originally adopted by both the County and the City in 1988. If the area served by a new water line does not have wastewater collection lines, then sewer lines will also be installed at the same time. After installation of the water lines, roads will be initially paved or repaved to assist in the reduction of regional dust and particulate matter in the air.

The proposed project is considered to be a Federal action requiring compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). In accordance with the environmental review requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality found at 40 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 1500 and with the use as guidance of EPA's implementing regulations found at 40 CFR Part 6 entitled "Procedures for Implementing the Requirements of the Council on Environmental Quality on the National Environmental Policy Act", the EPA is preparing this Environmental Assessment (EA) to assist in determining the environmental impacts of the proposed action, and in evaluating whether an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) or a Finding of No Significant Impact (FNSI) will be prepared for the proposed project.

PURPOSE AND NEED

The project area is approximately 11.5 square miles in size, and extends from the Rio Grande west to the mesa slopes. The area has a semi-rural land use pattern with pockets of dense development, shallow ground water, and predominantly on-site water wells for drinking and septic systems for wastewater disposal. This combination of physical setting and waste disposal practices poses a continued threat to ground water quality. Residents of the South Valley have expressed concern regarding drinking water quality and the availability of water for fire protection

Septic tank effluent discharged in the South Valley could cause localized health hazards and widespread contamination of shallow domestic wells. Although high rates of gastrointestinal disease, birth related problems, or cancer have not been identified, nitrate levels that exceed national and state standards have been measured in local high-density development areas. Biological decomposition of wastewater from septic systems has created oxygen deficient (anaerobic) ground water conditions in the South Valley resulting in elevated concentrations of iron, manganese, and hydrogen sulfide. While these constituents are not typically health threatening, they pose adverse aesthetic problems to the taste and smell of water. Additionally, there are individual overused water systems in portions of the project area. The majority of the area relies on individual wells which vary in age, depth, condition and reliability of operation.

The Bernalillo County Fire Department currently responds to fires in the area by a tanker shuttle operation with fire engines and tanker trucks that carry water. A water distribution system throughout the project area would provide quicker fire suppression time, improved public

safety, reduced property loss, and potential savings on insurance premiums to the residents and businesses in the South Valley.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

As previously stated, the proposed project is located in the South Valley area of Bernalillo County. The project planning area for purposes of this environmental assessment will follow a northern boundary along Metzgar Road, Coors Boulevard, Rio Bravo Boulevard, and Blake Road. The southern boundary is Isleta Pueblo. The Rio Grande is the eastern boundary and the 5,063 feet contour line west of Coors Boulevard is the western boundary. Additionally, the planning area will include the new reservoir location and the transmission line corridor to the reservoir. These boundaries were selected because they encompass an area not currently served by a public water system, and are part of the City's Master Plan of Water Supply. This planning area is also consistent with the land use designations in the Southwest Area Plan (SWAP) as adopted by both the Bernalillo County Board of Commissioners and the Albuquerque City Council. Any and all construction related to this project will occur within those boundaries and at the new reservoir location and the transmission line corridor to the reservoir. Construction outside of those boundaries is not covered by this assessment and is prohibited.

The water supply for the proposed system will be obtained from existing storage reservoirs which include the Miles Reservoir on the east side of the Rio Grande, and the West Mesa Reservoir on the west side of the Rio Grande. Water will be conveyed to the project area through two large pipelines with points of connection to the ABWUA system at existing transmission lines located at Broadway and Prosperity Avenue on the east side, and at Blake Road and Unser Boulevard on the west side. The east side transmission line will require a river crossing which is anticipated to occur in the vicinity of Lagunitas Road and Pajarito Road. Eventually, a new reservoir in the project area will be required.

To provide water storage for fire protection and to serve the future needs of the expansion area, a new reservoir will probably be constructed on the west mesa near a land surface elevation that will provide a water level that can meet the minimum pressure requirement of 50 pounds per square inch. It is anticipated that a new reservoir will be located along Pajarito Road. The final location of the reservoir (s) will be determined during the detailed design phase in accordance with the reservoir siting study requirements. Reservoir storage capacity needed to support the area for the year 2025 is 3.5 million gallons, with ultimate build out in 2043 at 5.7 million gallons.

Based on the preliminary hydraulic analysis, the project will consist of 30-inch diameter transmission lines connecting to the existing piping, as well as, major distribution mains ranging in size from 8 to 16 inches in diameter. Final pipe sizes and layout will be determined during the detailed design phase. The proposed expansion area falls within two pressure zones, so some method of pressure reduction will be required to provide consumers with an acceptable range of water pressure. This pressure reduction is likely to be accomplished by either pressure reducing

stations in specific zones of the distribution network, or by individual pressure reducing valves at each consumer service connection that requires pressure reduction.

Since the expansion area will be supplied with water from existing ABWUA reservoirs and transmission lines from the northwest and east, booster stations will probably be required for each transmission line to convey water to the expansion area at a rate that can meet system demands. The size of the booster stations will be based on replenishing the proposed reservoir volume equal to the peak daily usage in an assumed 18-hour period. It is likely that the booster station construction will be phased with the initial intent to meet demands through the year 2025, and later expanded to meet demand at ultimate build out once future demands have increased.

ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The funding recipient evaluated and considered a range of various alternatives to address the infrastructure needs of the area. Important factors influencing the evaluation of the processes and their recommended solutions include environmental acceptability, overall costs, availability of land for the intended uses, maximum reuse of existing facilities when applicable, operation and maintenance costs, system reliability, accommodation of future expansion needs, and public acceptance. Adherence to local, state and Federal regulations is of prime importance and concern to the funding recipient. The following is a discussion of the alternatives considered or evaluated during the development of the project:

A. No Action: The NEPA environmental review process requires consideration of the "no action" alternative. This alternative will allow the current public health concerns and environmental contamination to continue. The environmental consequences of taking "no action", which would allow continued deterioration of the area, was compared with the benefits to be gained from the construction of the proposed project. Since taking "no action" is unresponsive to the current and future infrastructure needs of the funding recipient, and does not protect public health and environmental standards in the area, this alternative was **rejected** from further consideration in favor of implementing the proposed project.

B. Optimum Utilization of Existing Facility: Since water in the project planning area is now provided by over 1,260 individual wells and these vary considerably in depth, age, and condition, optimizing the existing water supply system was not considered to be a reasonable alternative. This alternative was **rejected** from further consideration in favor of implementing the proposed project.

C. New Construction Alternatives: The proposed water system expansion will obtain a water supply by connecting to the existing ABWUA system. Initially other alternatives were considered, such as developing independent wells or water diversions and treatment plants. It was determined that such facilities would be inefficient duplications of effort. The VUP already provides water service to the northern part of the South Valley, and there is adequate capacity and water supply to serve the current project area. Several options were considered as follows:

1. Rural/Domestic Level of Service: A rural/domestic level of service (LOS) means that water use is restricted to typical residential indoor household uses only with no outdoor water use. It would provide limited fire protection that is based only on proximity to major infrastructure. Fire protection would not be provided and there would be no fire hydrants in residential areas. The system would be designed to accommodate average and peak daily demands of 80 and 184 gallons per capita day (gpcd), respectively. This alternative has the lowest construction costs, does not allow for irrigation of outdoor areas or residential fire protection, has limited capacity for institutional and commercial fire protection, has minimal business opportunities, has minimal flexibility in the future, and does not allow for irrigation of agriculture. Although this is the least expensive new construction alternative, it does not satisfy the selection factors listed above. This alternative was **rejected** from further consideration in favor of implementing the proposed project.

2. Urban Level of Service: An urban LOS has no restrictions on the type of indoor and outdoor water use, but water conservation practices consistent with the ABWUA would be in effect. Residential and commercial fire protection would also be provided in accordance with ABWUA standards. The urban system would accommodate average and peak daily demands of 175 and 350 gpcd, respectively. This alternative has the highest construction costs, allows for irrigation of outdoor areas and residential fire protection, has capacity for institutional and commercial fire protection, has maximum business opportunities, has the maximum flexibility in the future, and allows for irrigation of agriculture, which is unnecessary because existing surface and well water can still be used for irrigation after the new system is installed. Although this alternative satisfies the selection factors, it is the most expensive alternative and allows for more capacity than is required. This alternative was **rejected** from further consideration in favor of implementing the proposed project.

3. Suburban Level of Service: A suburban LOS means water use is restricted to typical residential indoor household uses with limited outdoor use for landscaped areas. Residential and commercial fire protection would be based on Uniform Fire Code (UFC) requirements. The suburban system would be designed to accommodate average and peak daily demands of 130 and 299 gpcd, respectively. This alternative has a construction cost less than the urban LOS, but higher than the rural LOS alternative. It allows for irrigation of outdoor areas and residential fire protection, has capacity for institutional and commercial fire protection, has maximum business opportunities, has the maximum flexibility in the future, and does not allow for irrigation of agriculture. This alternative is considered to achieve an appropriate balance between moderate cost, a high level of reliability and service, minimal environmental impact, and comparable engineering feasibility and complexity with the other alternatives, and is the **preferred** alternative.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The project area is situated in central New Mexico on Sections 23, 26, and 35, on the Isleta and Albuquerque West Quadrangles of the U.S. Geological Survey Topographic Maps (7.5 Minute Series). This area, known as the South Valley, is in the Rio Grande floodplain, which is

characterized by relatively flat terrain at an average elevation of 4,900 feet. The South Valley is within the Basin and Range Physiographic Province. This province is characterized by gently sloping alluvium filled basins separated by faulted mountain ranges. The Upper Tertiary–Santa Fe Formation, characterizes the subsurface. This formation consists mostly of unconsolidated gravel, sand, silt, and clay and is part of the Santa Fe Group aquifer system.

The terrain in the proposed project service area is characterized by the valley floor on the eastern boundary with increasing elevation to the western boundary. Ground surface elevations within the project area range between approximately 4,890 feet at the valley floor to 5060 feet on the West Mesa. Additional areas that extend beyond the project boundaries will likely be needed for water storage reservoir(s), pump station(s) and transmission mains necessary to provide water to the proposed service area.

The climate in the planning area is classified as semiarid to arid. Temperatures range from less than 20 degrees Fahrenheit in the winter to over 90 degrees in the summer, with an overall yearly average of around 57 degrees. Annual average precipitation is less than 10 inches, with the majority falling in the summer months as a result of intense thunderstorms. Humidity in the project area averages around 43 percent. Strong winds are common throughout the spring and summer seasons, and play an active role in the erosion and deposition of sediments in the area.

The project area is largely a residential and small farming community, characterized by dispersed single-family homes surrounded by open space, farmland, irrigation canals, laterals, and drains. There is also some commercial development along Coors and Isleta Boulevards. Institutional uses such as schools, churches, community centers, and other facilities that provide public and quasi public services also exist throughout the project area.

IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The proposed project was analyzed to identify potential short-term, long-term, and cumulative impacts on the environment. Factors that were considered include the probability of impact occurrence, magnitude of any occurrence, if any predicted occurrence is determined to be reversible/irreversible, direct/indirect or one-time/cumulative, the proposed action's conformity to legal mandates, and the social distribution of risks and benefits. The proposed project should not have a substantial negative impact upon current land uses or land values, nor should it have a substantial impact upon the values of surrounding land holdings. The proposed action is expected to have energy requirements typical of other construction projects of similar scope, size and duration, and will be conducted in accordance with the requirements of all local and state regulations.

The majority of the impacts associated with the proposed project will be short-term and temporary due to actual construction activities, and will cease immediately upon completion of construction work in any particular area. There are no significant adverse environmental impacts associated with the proposed action that cannot be reduced to acceptable levels. The only

irretrievable resources committed to this project are labor, machinery wear, materials, funds spent, and energy consumed during construction. The potential short and long-term, direct, indirect and cumulative impacts resulting from the proposed action are identified and discussed below.

1. Biological Resources Including Threatened and Endangered Species**:** The proposed project was coordinated with both the United Sates Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish (NMDGF). The USFWS has agreed to a formal Consultation Agreement with the County which identifies commitments made by the County for the protection of Federally listed species and their designated critical habitat within the valley areas. EPA is agreeable to this approach as both a cost savings to the County, and as an appropriate method for species protection. In addition, EPA further requires the County to obtain written approval from the USFWS on an annual basis, at a minimum, before proceeding with any construction projected during any given calendar year.

The proposed project was also coordinated with the NMDGF concerning protection of animal and plant species of state concern. The NMDGF stated that they do not anticipate significant impacts to wildlife resources or sensitive habitats.

Based upon the formal agreement with the USFWS and consultation with the NMDGF, there will be no effect on Federal or state listed animal or plant species or their designated critical habitat. However, should protected animal or plant species or their designated habitat be discovered during construction, work will stop immediately in that general vicinity, and the funding recipient will immediately notify the USFWS and the NMDGF of the discovery. Appropriate mitigation measures will be developed and implemented, as needed, in consultation with both the USFWS and the NMDGF before construction will be allowed to continue.

2. Cultural/Historic Resources: The proposed project was coordinated with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and interested Indian Tribes concerning the protection of sensitive resources with archaeological, historical, architectural, or cultural significance. Although the construction of the proposed project will be primarily conducted within existing road rights-of-way, historical records show that there is a high potential of uncovering cultural deposits throughout the valley areas. After initial consultation with the County concerning commitments made in a Programmatic Agreement, the SHPO agreed to the conditions and commitments made by the County for the protection of such resources within the valley areas. EPA is agreeable to this alternative approach as both a cost savings to the County, and as an appropriate method for protecting cultural resources. In addition, EPA further requires the County to obtain written approval from the OCA on an annual basis, at a minimum, before proceeding with any construction projected during any given calendar year.

However, should materials, artifacts or properties of a potentially historic or archaeological nature be unearthed during construction, work will stop immediately in that general vicinity, and the funding recipient will immediately notify the SHPO of the discovery. Any such resources discovered will be evaluated in accordance with the requirements of 36 CFR

Part 800. Appropriate mitigation measures will be developed and implemented, as needed, in consultation with the SHPO before construction is allowed to continue.

3. Floodplain: The proposed project was coordinated with the local Floodplain Administrator (FA) concerning the protection of the floodplain in the area, and compliance with local floodplain management regulations. The FA for the County stated that the Flood Insurance Rate Maps for the area show that portions of the proposed project are located within the 100-year floodplain which cannot be avoided during construction, further stated that construction of the proposed project should not adversely impact the existing floodplains, and requested further coordination during utilities design for each construction phase. The County must continue to coordinate with the FA as requested.

4. Wetlands: The project was coordinated with the United States Army Corps of Engineers (COE) concerning the protection of jurisdictional wetlands. The COE stated that the placement of dredged or fill material into the Rio Grande or other drainage features in the South Valley area that flow into the river, including jurisdictional waters of the United States and wetlands, will require authorization under the provisions of Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA). The COE further stated that Nationwide Permit Number 12 may authorize construction of the proposed project if the County meets the terms and conditions of the permit.

The County hired a consulting firm to conduct a preliminary biological survey of the project area in August and September 2003. The survey indicates that there are no jurisdictional wetlands as defined by the Clean Water Act in the project area. If wetlands are affected by the final design of the project, the County is required to coordinate with the COE and the New Mexico Environment Department (NMED) Surface Water Quality Bureau (SWQB). No significant adverse impacts to wetlands are expected to occur as a result of implementation of the project since the County is required to identify any and all jurisdictional waters of the United States including wetlands, to coordinate further with the COE prior to construction should such resources be identified, and to obtain any and all necessary permits prior to construction.

However, as additional means of insuring that proper consideration is afforded the need to protect the natural beneficial functions of floodplains and wetlands, as well as the need to minimize potential flood hazards to life and property, the construction funding is conditioned to read:

a. The recipient agrees that no wastewater generated by development located in the floodplains or wetlands shall be treated or transported by the project facilities for a period of 50 years. This restriction does not apply to development, which existed prior to the issuance date of the Finding of No Significant Impact related to this project;

b. The recipient agrees to adopt and enforce suitable ordinances and implementing procedures for effective local administration of this floodplains and wetlands service area restriction. On application of the recipient's governing body and after considering all relevant information on a proposed development's effects on the natural functions and values of the

affected floodplain, the EPA Regional Administrator may waive the service area restriction in individual cases; and

c. EPA and the recipient intend that this floodplains and wetlands service area restriction shall benefit any person, organization, or entity possessing an interest in preservation of the natural environment in the 100-year floodplains and wetlands subject to this restriction. Any such beneficiary may seek enforcement of the restriction against the recipient or its successor in a court of competent jurisdiction if notice of the intent to seek enforcement is first given the recipient and EPA Region 6 and neither entity initiates corrective action within 90 days of receiving such notice.

5. Surface Water Resources: The proposed project was coordinated with both the National Park Service and the NMED, SWQB concerning the protection of surface water resources. The most prominent body of surface water in the area is the nearby Rio Grande which is not listed in the Wild and Scenic Rivers system or under study for listing in the system. The NMED stated that the proposed project does not appear to conflict with state environmental laws or regulations, and will not produce environmental effects. However, the project must comply with storm water discharge requirements, and state water quality standards and regulations established by the New Mexico Water Quality Control Commission. NMED recommended the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to control or prevent discharge pollutants in storm water from the site.

The County is required to coordinate further with the SWQB prior to actual construction in order to ensure that the project will comply with any and all necessary storm water permits and BMPs. Since wetlands and other surface water resources protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act are not known to occur in the project area, surface water resources will not be adversely impacted by construction of the project.

6. Ground Water Resources: The proposed project has been coordinated with the NMED, Ground Water Quality Bureau (GWQB) concerning the protection of ground water resources in the area. The GWQB stated that the proposed project does not appear to conflict with state environmental laws or regulations, and will not produce environmental effects. A positive impact of the project will be reduction in use of potentially contaminated domestic wells which will be replaced with the public water system in compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act.

7. Prime and Unique Farmlands: The proposed project was coordinated with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) concerning the protection of prime and/or unique farmlands. The District Conservationist for the NRCS Agricultural Service Center located in Albuquerque stated that soils of prime farmland designation do not exist in the project area. Since these protected resources are not known to occur in the project area, prime and/or unique farmlands will not be adversely impacted by construction of the project.

8. Air Quality: The project was coordinated with both the NMED, Air Quality Bureau, the Albuquerque Environmental Health Department (AEHD), and the EPA, Air Planning Section concerning the protection of air quality. The project is located in an area that is currently

designated by the EPA as a maintenance area for carbon monoxide which is formed from the partial combustion of internal combustion engines. The project requires a Federal conformity determination with the air State Implementation Plan to insure air quality. Also, all vehicles and equipment used in the construction of the project must comply with the regulations concerning control of air pollution from mobile sources. Since the emissions from construction of the project will be below required levels, general conformity does not apply, which essentially exempts the project from further requirements of the air general conformity regulations. However, the County must obtain and comply with any and all air quality permits required by the AEHD prior to the initiation of construction.

9. Environmental Justice: The proposed project was reviewed for compliance with Executive Order 12898 entitled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice (EJ) in Minority and Low-Income Populations". Potential environmental impacts to minority and low-income communities were evaluated using Geographical Information System maps, census demographic data, and a mathematical formula to rank the project for EJ impacts. The project will serve all populations equally and will be constructed in a manner to ensure that no persons or populations will be discriminated against or denied the benefits of the project because of their race, color, income level, or national origin. There will be no adverse impacts that are considered disproportionate to any particular population(s) based on ethnicity or income.

10. Coastal and Barrier Resource: The proposed project area does not include any coastal resources since the entire state of New Mexico is inland and not adjacent to any coastal location. Therefore, the requirements of coastal and barrier resource protection acts are not applicable to the proposed project.

11. Cumulative Impacts: Potential cumulative impacts would be those impacts to the local environment that would result from the proposed project in combination with other ongoing actions, and those reasonably foreseeable future actions. No other major construction activity is being conducted presently or planned for the immediate future. The proposed project will not individually nor cumulatively over time have a negative impact on the quality of the human or natural environment. To the contrary, improved infrastructure will have a positive environmental effect by enhancing public health, and protecting the local environment from continued contamination.

DOCUMENTATION, COORDINATION, AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

A public hearing for the proposed project was held on October 23, 2003, at 6:30 pm at the Polk Middle School cafeteria located at 2220 Raymac Road SE, in Albuquerque and was properly advertised in advance of the hearing in the newspaper of largest circulation in the area, which is the Albuquerque Journal. The newspaper notice stated that the EID prepared for the project was available for review prior to the hearing at the South Valley Library, Los Padillas Community Center, Bernalillo County Public Works Department, and Taschek Environmental Consulting. In addition to the newspaper advertisement, notices of the hearing were posted at several key locations throughout the County and on the County's website.

The purpose of the meeting was to present and explain the purpose and need for the project, any potential environmental impacts from the project, the proposed alternatives, and to solicit input from the public. A summary of the proposed action was presented which consisted of a description of the County's water distribution infrastructure needs, a description of the recommended facilities, regulatory requirements for the project, anticipated construction and operation and maintenance costs, financing, and potential environmental impacts from the proposed action. Interested parties were invited to comment during the hearing, and to provide any written information pertinent to the project within a reasonable time frame prior to the closing of the formal public comment period. A few members of the general public made oral statements during the hearing, and all comments were favorable or unrelated to the project. No adverse public comments have been offered for consideration either in person, in writing, or by telephone concerning any aspect of the project.

During the process of conducting the environmental review and preparing the Environmental Assessment (EA) for this project, coordination has been conducted with all required resource protection agencies to solicit and incorporate their initial review and comments. Copies of this EA have been provided to the following agencies and offices for their final review and comments, if any. Other interested parties may request a copy of the EA in writing from the EPA, Office of Planning and Coordination (6EN-XP), 1445 Ross Avenue, Dallas, Texas 75202-2733.

REFERENCES

1. Environmental Information Document, South Valley Water System Expansion, Bernalillo County, NM. HDR Engineering and Taschek Environmental Consulting, May 2004.
2. Facility Plan, Preliminary Engineering Report. South Valley Water System Expansion, Bernalillo County, NM. HDR Engineering and Taschek Environmental Consulting, May 2004.
3. Public Involvement Summary, HDR Engineering and Taschek Environmental Consulting, May 2004.

RECOMMENDATION

Based upon completion of this Environmental Assessment, and a detailed review of the supporting information contained in the EID, the Public Hearing Responsiveness Summary and the Facility Plan which were prepared for the project, and other pertinent technical, engineering and administrative documentation, the proposed project is considered to be cost effective and environmentally sound. Therefore, it is recommended that a Finding of No Significant Impact be issued for this project.

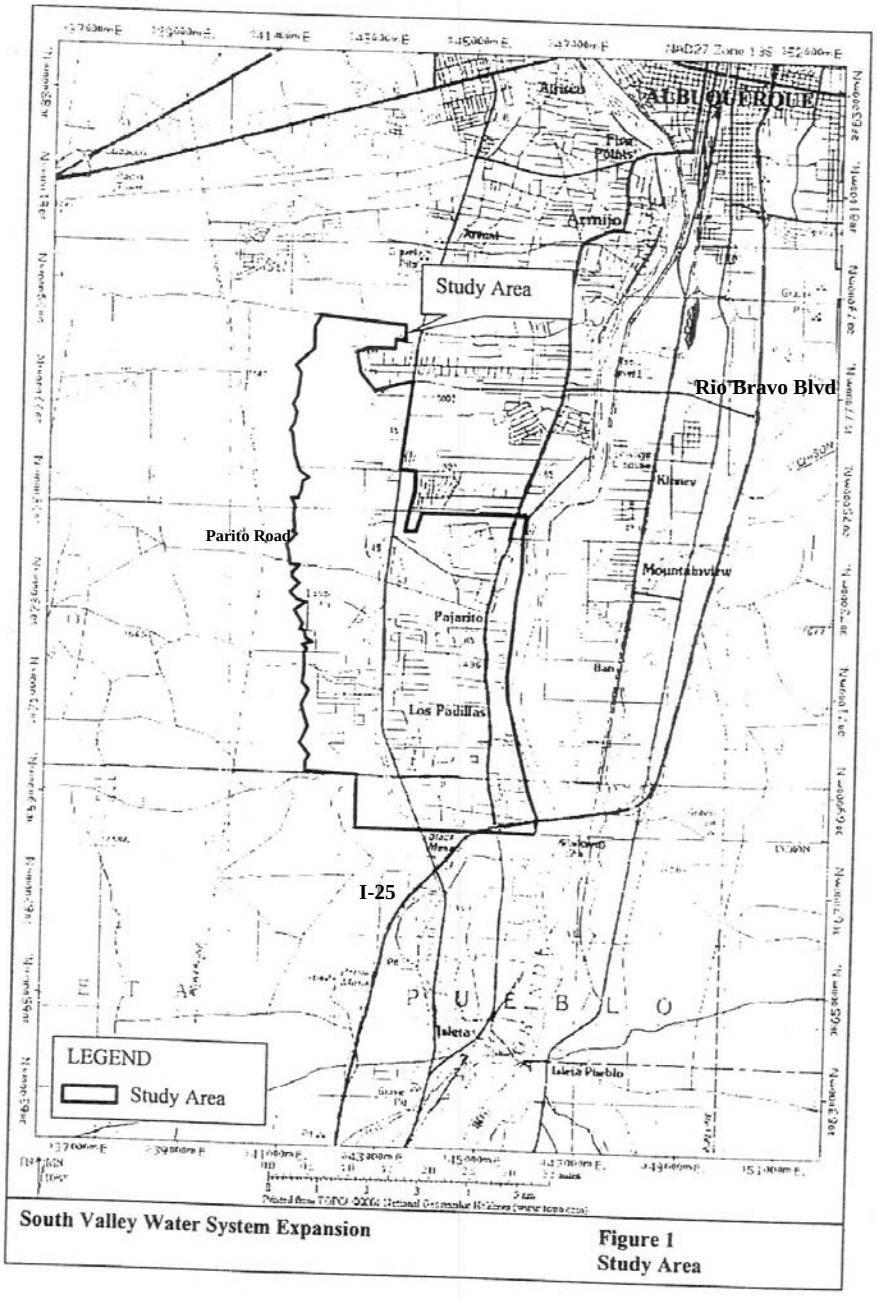

Figure 1. South Valley Drinking Water Project Area.

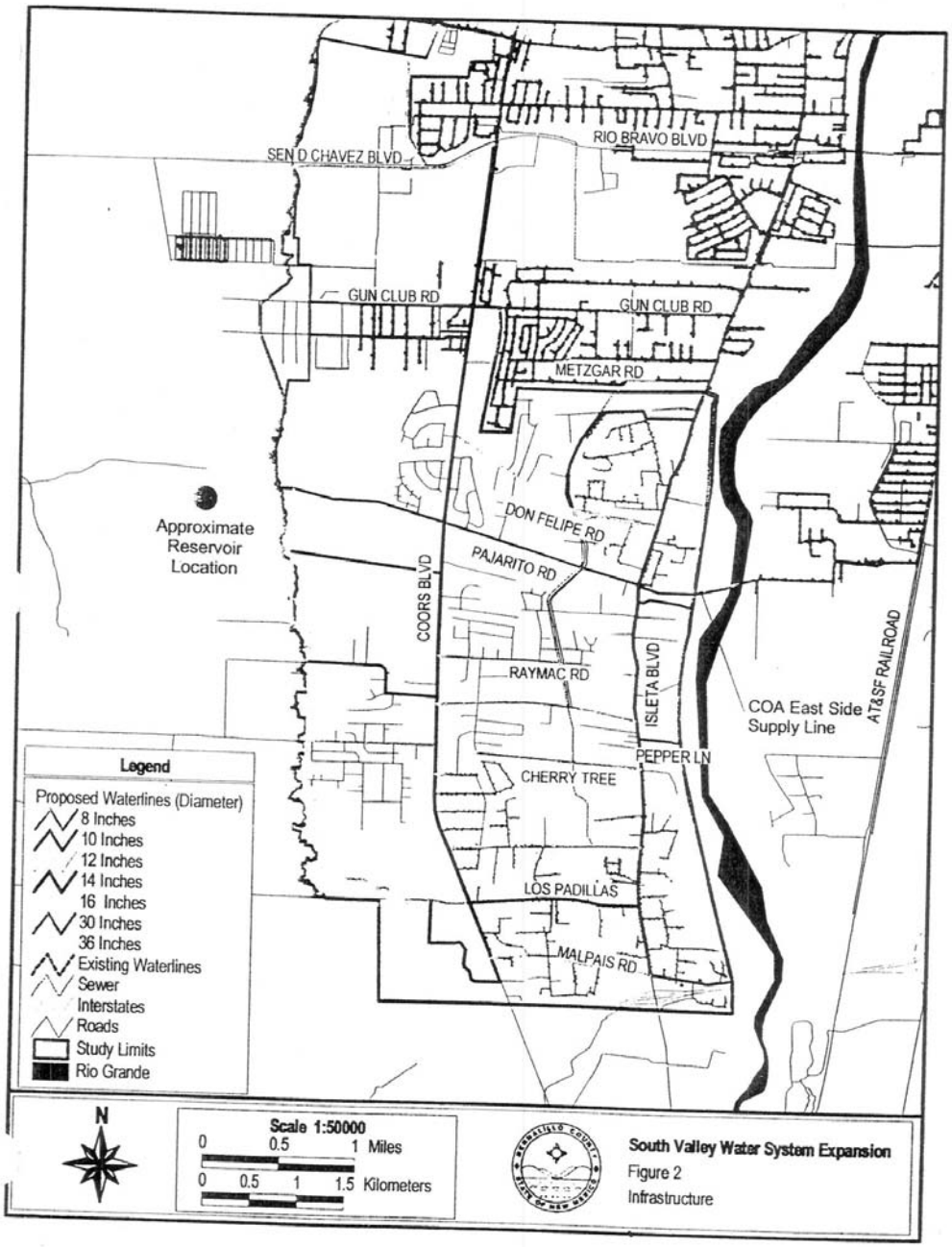

Figure 2. Infrastructure.

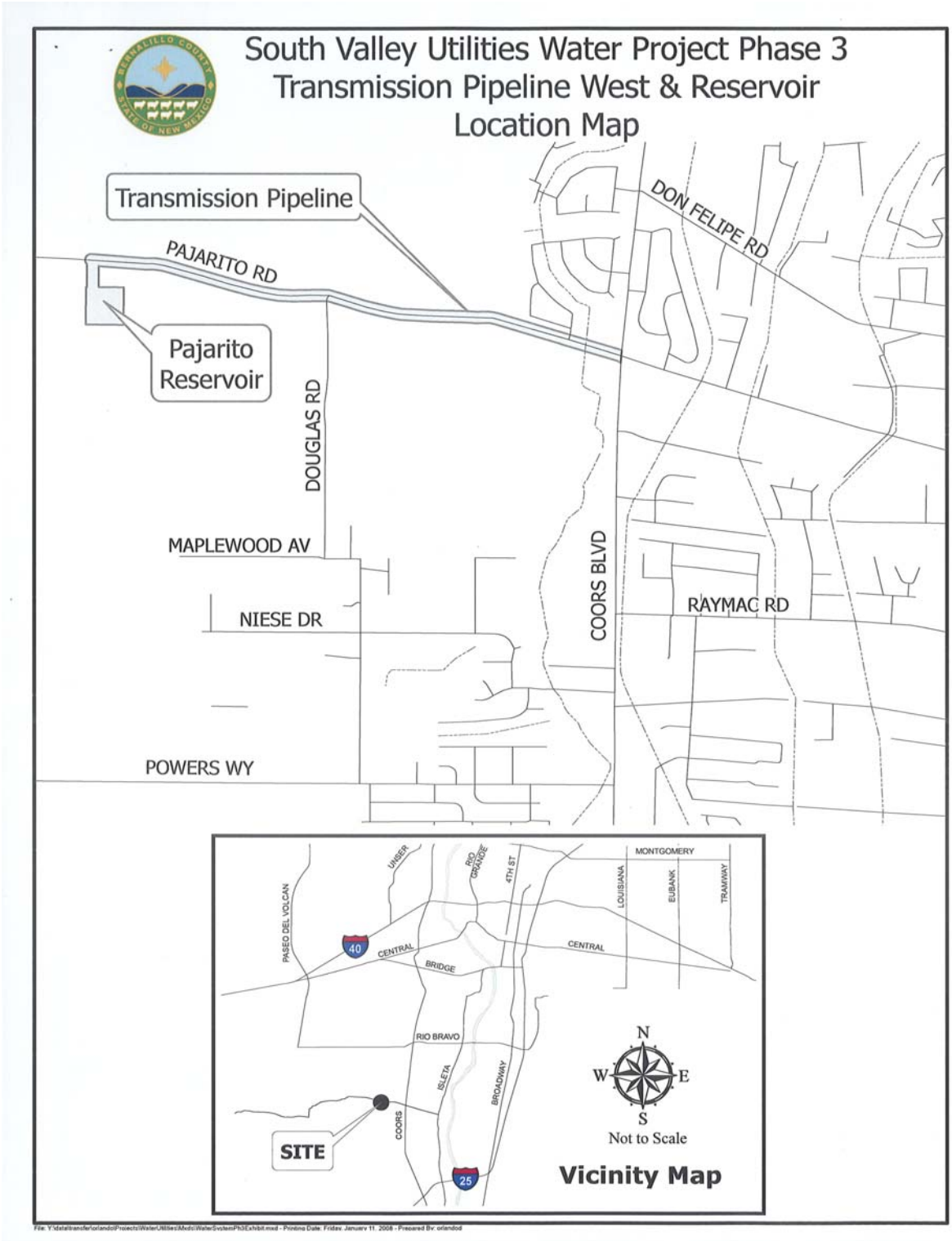

Figure 3. Proposed Project location under Corps Authority.